



ANTHONY J. STASKUNAS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 15th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

Statement of Rep. Tony Staskunas, AB 594

Assembly Committee on Corrections and the Courts

January 7, 2010

Chairman Parisi and members, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share with you my support for Assembly Bill 594, a proposal relating to notifying a law enforcement agency when certain persons are released from the custody of the Department of Corrections. AB 594 is a reintroduction of 2007 AB 537 which was introduced by Representative Gundrum and me.

Under current law, the Department of Corrections is required to notify the victim of a crime when the offender is no longer under the supervision of the Department of Corrections or is petitioning for early release. When a criminal is petitioning for early release, the victim is allowed the opportunity to testify against the petition before the Earned Release Review Commission. In cases where the victim was murdered, the family of the victim receives the notification and the opportunity to testify against a petition.

AB 594 would affect cases where a criminal has been imprisoned for killing a law enforcement officer. Under the bill, in those limited cases, the law enforcement agency that employed and the bargaining unit that represented the officer would be extended the same rights to notification and opportunity to testify that family members currently have.

I feel that it is important to recognize that law enforcement officers share a special bond with their coworkers that is easily compared to the bonds between family members. When one of their brothers or sisters is killed in the line of duty, the loss they feel is very deep and very direct. For this reason alone, I believe that they should have the right to notification and be afforded the opportunity to testify against early release.

In addition, sometimes family members are uncomfortable testifying against the criminals who took away their loved ones. By allowing the surrogate law enforcement family of a slain officer to appear on behalf of the officer's family, the relatives of the fallen officer could be spared a great deal of emotional trauma. It is also important to remember that the state sometimes loses track of surviving family members and has difficulty notifying them.

Finally, I would like to point out that the fiscal estimates on AB 594 predict that the cost of this bill will be minimal and will easily be absorbed within current budgets.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.